



AN INTRODUCTION TO ASYLUM FOR LGBTQ+ IMMIGRANTS

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oasis
LEGAL SERVICES™

Est. 2017



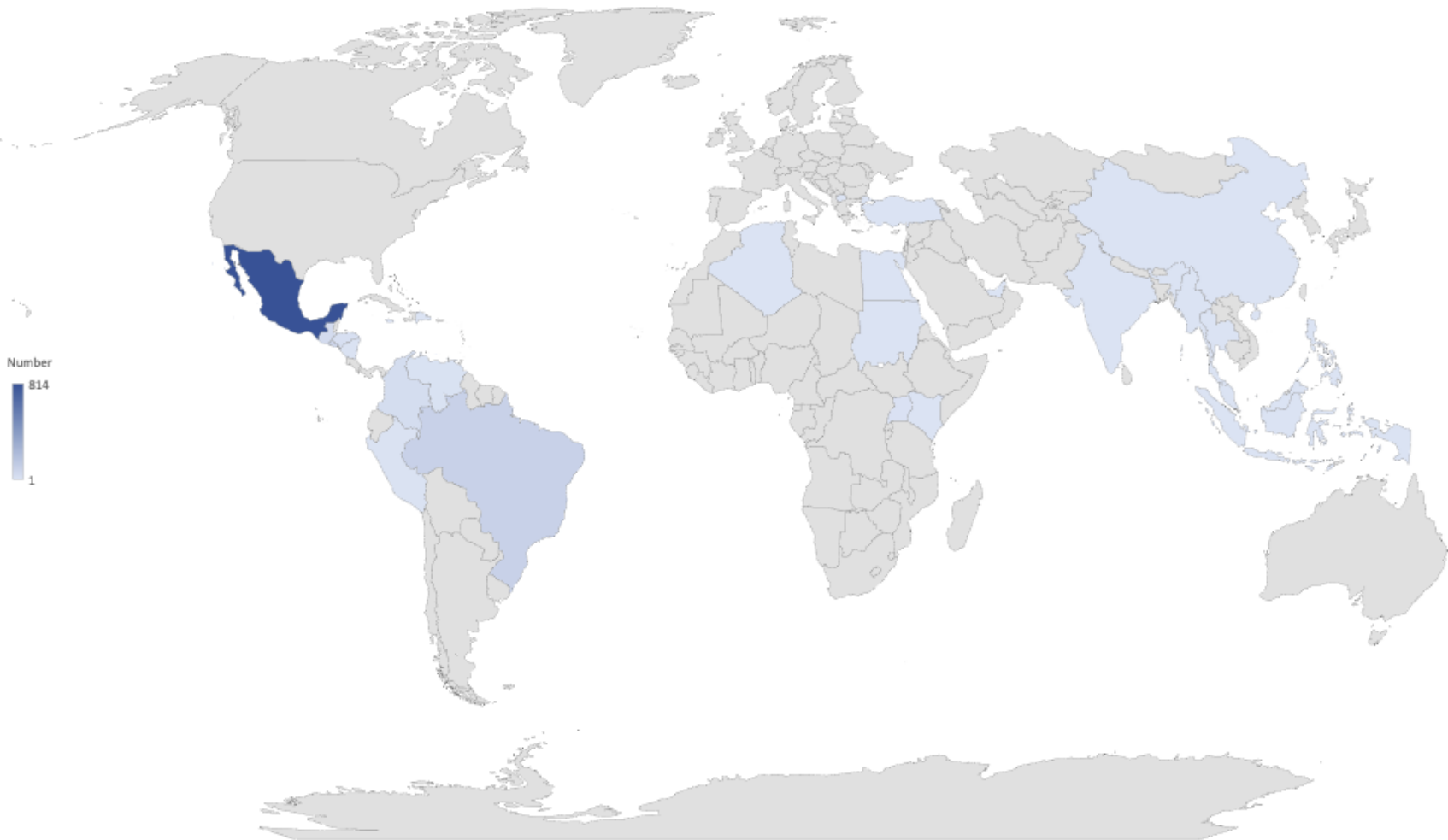
Oasis Legal Services: An Introduction

- **Our mission:** Oasis Legal Services proudly provides quality legal immigration services to under-represented low-income groups with a focus on LGBTQIA+ communities. By acknowledging, respecting, and honoring their struggles, we empower immigrants so that dignity grows and integrity blooms.
- We are a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization providing comprehensive legal services to assist LGBTQIA+ immigrants:
 - Screening for immigration relief
 - Affirmative asylum
 - Residency
 - Citizenship
 - Family petitions (limited)

Our Clients

- Approximately 10,000 undocumented LGBTQ people living in the Bay Area
- Living anywhere served by the San Francisco Asylum Office
- Countries of Origin —

Oasis Asylum Clients by Country of Origin



Contra Costa County Residents

- 4th most common county of residence for Oasis clients
- About 11% of our active clients currently live in Contra Costa County

Asylum

WHAT IS ASYLUM?

Definition of a Refugee

A refugee is any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

-INA § 101(a)(42)(A); see also 8 C.F.R. § 208.13 (establishing eligibility for asylum).

Benefits of Asylum



- Permanent status to live and work in the U.S.
- Permanent status for spouses and children
- Freedom to travel
- Access to physical and mental health support
- Feeling safe coming out as LGBTQIA+
- Pathway to citizenship



LGBTQ asylum

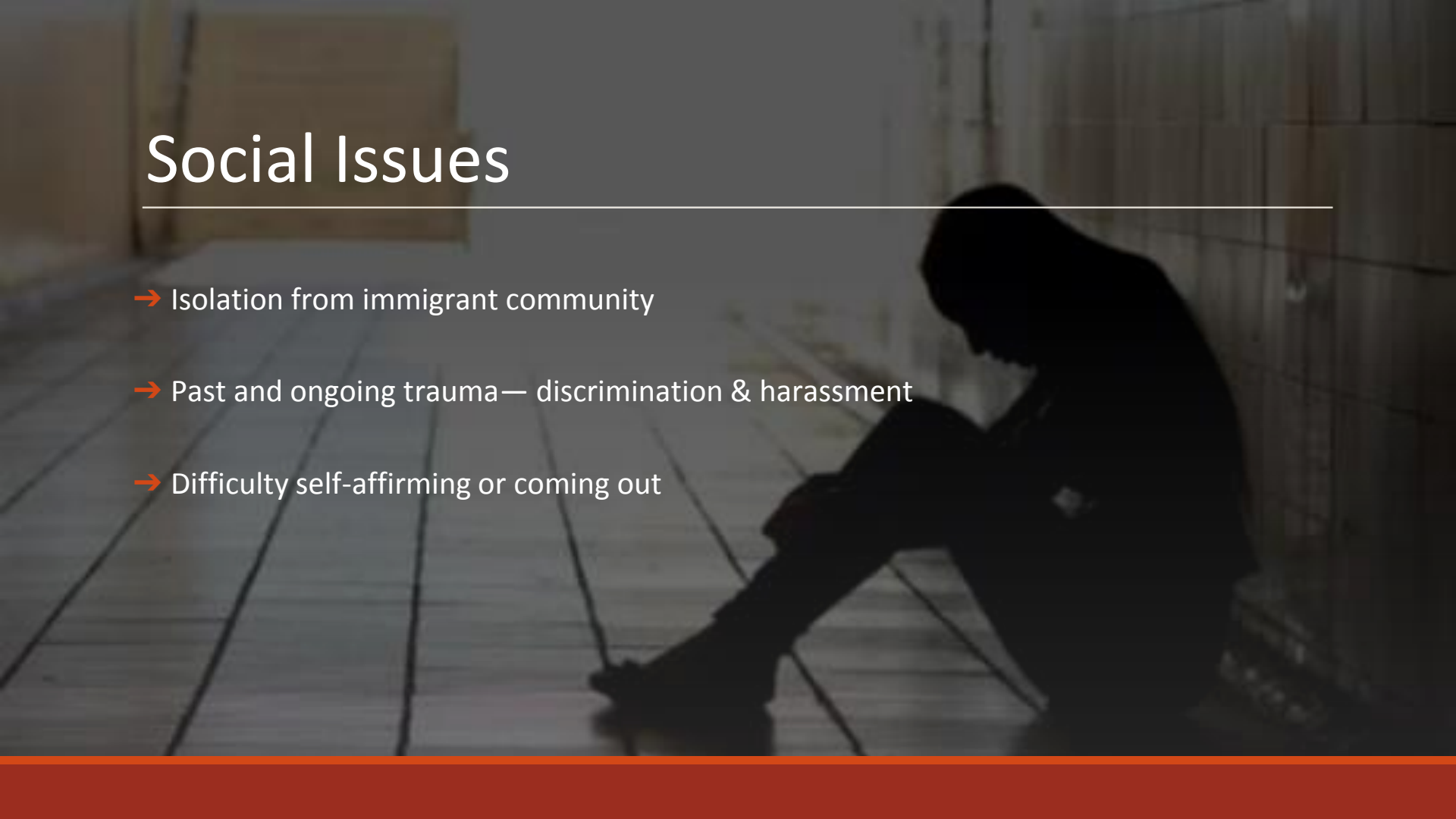
WHY DOES OASIS FOCUS ON LGBTQ ASYLUM-SEEKERS?

Barriers for LGBTQ Asylum-Seekers

WHY IS THIS PROCESS SO DIFFICULT?

Social Issues

- Isolation from immigrant community
- Past and ongoing trauma— discrimination & harassment
- Difficulty self-affirming or coming out



Mental Health Issues

- PTSD, anxiety, depression
- Telling story is re-traumatizing
- Difficulty trusting authority & seeking help
- Intense fear of return to country of origin



Legal Issues

- One-year-bar
- Proving sexual orientation and/or gender identity
- SF asylum approval rate is approximately 40-60%



Case Examples



JESSE

“In Dubai, it is illegal to be gay. I saw an execution broadcast live on TV. In the Philippines, I went through conversion therapy and I felt hated.

“Oasis made me feel welcome and safe. I still have a lingering fear of leaving the house, but I feel safer experiencing the world and creating my life here.

“Asylum gave me a second chance at life. In the United States, I can be myself 100%. ”



Opportunities to Support

HOW CAN CONTRA COSTA SHOW UP FOR LGBTQ+ ASYLEES?

Primary Areas of Need

- Contra Costa CARES expansion:
 - Greater transparency and access-related support for new CARES sign-ups interested in mental health coverage
 - Increased navigation support for enrollment in CARES coverage
 - Especially related to financial navigation and the logistics of switching insurances and providers when entering or exiting CARES coverage
- Services for undocumented immigrants, especially meet service gaps for asylum seekers
- Overall suggestion:
 - Model county-based on Santa Clara County, which has an Office of LGBTQ Affairs and Office of Immigrant Affairs, and also provides funding directly to legal service providers assisting undocumented county residents in applying for immigration relief. SF, LA, and San Mateo are other models.
- Explore options to provide additional programming for low English-proficiency (LEP) community members
 - Both job training and ESL classes/assessments that are community based specifically for immigrant communities
- Clients have expressed dissatisfaction with transportation and connectivity options for those that live further from urban centers and need to get to work, healthcare services, and county services. For example, Richmond residents getting to Martinez.

Questions?

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